Food security among the Orang Rimba in Jambi: transformation processes among contemporary Indonesian hunter-gatherers

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An Orang Rimba man in Sako Tulang is taking a rest after working on his rubber plantation. 2013

II The Orang Rimba In An Interconnected World

"*Beratap cikai,*
bedinding bener,
bertikar gambut,
berayam kuo,
berkambing kijang,
berkerbau pada tuno."
(Tengganai Ngembar[11] 2007[12]).

(Living under a roof made of *cikai* leaves,
walls constructed from roots and tree bark,
swathed by mud, decorated by peacocks,
keeping deer instead of goats,
keeping tapir instead of buffalo,
all of which are given by the forest.)

2.1 Introduction: President Jokowi visits the Orang Rimba

It was during my writing time spent in the Netherlands that mainstream and social media broadcast extensively the visit that Indonesian President Jokowi paid to the Orang Rimba on 30 October 2015. My inbox was replete with emails and Facebook news feeds from my friends and colleagues, who sent messages and questions about the controversy of Jokowi's visit to Bukit Suban, a home for the Orang Rimba in the southern part of Taman Nasional Bukit Duabelas (TNBD) and, coincidentally, one of my fieldwork locations. The media coverage of the visit included pictures of Jokowi crouching down in an oil palm plantation as he talked with a group of Orang Rimba dressed only in loincloths.[13]

[11] The only native history teller who was still alive at that moment, living in the Air Hitam area, the southern part of Bukit Duabelas national park of Jambi.

[12] Between 2006 and early 2008 I conducted a comparative study on food security among Orang Rimba in two locations, in Taman Nasional Bukit Duabelas (TNBD) and Pamenang District (alongside Sumatra Highway). The interview from which this oath was recorded, was conducted with Tengganai Ngembar (80 years old) and other *tumenggung* (leaders) in TNBD in September 2007.

[13] There are those who believe this was propaganda on Jokowi's part and that the pictures were staged with the aim of increasing Jokowi' popularity by showing the world that he cares for all his people, including *masyarakat adat* or indigenous peoples such as the Orang Rimba. According to them, the Orang Rimba were asked to wear the loincloths for the meeting with Jokowi, despite the fact that they no longer wear loincloths in their daily lives. The Orang Rimba were also ordered, the conspiracy theory continues, to act like "native and primitive" peoples. According to the presidential office, however, the visit was not a set-up and the Orang Rimba were not given orders to dress in traditional attire.

Such images of a high-profile person talking to common customary and native peoples are rare in Indonesia. Typically, *masyarakat adat* or indigenous peoples have been neglected by the state since Indonesia gained its independence. The general view of the state and the mainstream population is that *masyarakat adat* are seen as *terbelakang* (backwards) and *tertinggal* (underdeveloped). There is almost no space for indigenous peoples to participate in the development process, as they lack the necessary connections to authority and power. Indeed, the state considers these peoples a burden to the development process, a way of thinking that has led to many efforts to try to either assimilate or integrate *masyarakat adat* into mainstream society.

Jokowi was the first president of Indonesia to pay a visit and talk face to face with the Orang Rimba in their home territory. The last president to show any serious concern for the Orang Rimba was President Abdul Rahman Wahid, popularly known as Gus Dur. He ordered the conversion of the degraded Bukit Duabelas forests into a national park in 2000 (see section 2.8). However, Gus Dur never visited the Orang Rimba, despite a stopover in Jambi city. Thus, although Gus Dur contributed much to improving the conditions for the Orang Rimba, he did not engage with them directly.
On his official Twitter account, Jokowi tweeted several hours after the photos went viral on social media using 'Jkw', showing that it was actually him and not his public relations'

Figure 8. Jokowi meets the Orang Rimba under a shelter in an oil palm plantation near Bukit Suban, October 2015
Source: kompasiana 2015, https://www.kompasiana.com/nmala/563b1bd4509373d00803168b/kenapa-jokowi-ketemu-suku-anak-dalam-di-kebun-sawit?page=all

officers tweeting. The tweet, posted together with the picture of him squatting as he talked with the Orang Rimba, said:
"*Suku Anak Dalam adalah bagian dari kita. Mereka memerlukan ruang hidup yang layak* - Jkw"
meaning
"Suku Anak Dalam people are part of us. They need a decent living space - Jkw".

The government (especially the central government, through its Ministry of Social Affairs) has made various attempts at persuading the Orang Rimba to live like the Orang Melayu, the majority population in Jambi province. The government has its own term for the indigenous peoples in general, for what are known as 'isolated or remote customary communities'. Specifically for the Orang Rimba and other minority groups in Jambi, the government created the term Suku Anak Dalam in the 1960s. This was a new term for those indigenous peoples that had to be included in various government programs, especially the resettlement programs. This term is used up to this day by the government, especially for official purposes.
For a long time, *masyarakat adat* has been portrayed as "estranged, isolated, and backward" societies, with little if any assistance from the government. The government considers their non-sedentary lifestyles to be primitive. To that end, many efforts have been made to persuade them to leave the "abnormal" lives they lead and to integrate into "normal" society. Such efforts often took the form of resettlement programs. These programs included the provision of new housing, proselytization to convert to certain religious affiliations professed to by the mainstream population, dressing the way mainstream society does, undergoing formal education, and enhancing access to various public facilities. Not surprisingly, the orientation of such programs has largely been tailored towards enhancing uniformity with respect to traditional lifestyles, typified by dances and songs, at the expense of indigenous diversity (see Li 2002). No wonder, then, that the pictures of Jokowi squatting down with the Orang Rimba under the oil palms attracted a lot of public controversy and interest.
As part of his visit, Jokowi proposed to the Orang Rimba that they should become sedentary and move to permanent houses in a resettlement area. According to Jokowi, the Orang Rimba agreed to his proposal. However, the offer appeared to be a repetition of old failed proposals that are aimed at "controlling" *masyarakat adat* in Indonesia, including the Orang Rimba.
This chapter primarily discusses the ethnography of the Orang Rimba in general. It examines the Orang Rimba's present-day situation with respect to livelihoods, material, and non-material culture. It also addresses their social, economic, and cultural interconnection with the outside world. This includes relations with the government (and its development agenda), other ethnic groups, and market-based actors (plantation companies and so on). Some of the examples are the visit of Jokowi in 2015, the roles/influences of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), media, individuals, and other relevant stakeholders in the life of the Orang Rimba. In addition, this chapter provides the description of the designation of the Bukit Duabelas area as a national park, various state projects, and government efforts to resettle the Orang Rimba.

2.2 Historical background

One of the basic foundations of the Orang Rimba is expressed in the poem mentioned in the beginning of this chapter. The underlying message of the poem is that the forest is the provider of everything. The Orang Rimba's nomadic way of life is partly shaped by their use of natural resources, which are widely spread. Mobility is also driven by pressure from outsiders and the need to perform *melangun* (a period of mourning) whenever a person has died in their community.

To date, there has been no consistent research that confirms the origins of the Orang Rimba beyond doubt. If we look at the customs, the traditional technology, and the language of the Orang Rimba, it is obvious that they share a lot of similarities with the people of Jambi in general, but at the same time their hunting and gathering mode of living, their cosmology, their food taboos, and the practice of *melangun* sets them apart from neighboring groups. The article '*Mereka ingin mengubur Kubu*' ('Those who want to bury Kubu'), published in *Kompas*, describes the history of the Orang Rimba as something full of mystery (Kompas 17 April 2007).

Indeed, there are multiple versions of the Orang Rimba's history. For instance, the Orang Rimba who live in the Air Hitam area told me that they are natives of Jambi, who, during the Dutch colonial era, survived by living in the forests. At the time, Jambi was under the rule of the Sultan Thaha. This scenario would support the idea that the Orang Rimba are indeed secondary hunter-gatherers (see section 1.3), who may have retreated from power centers and resorted to hunting and gathering as a consequence.

The Orang Rimba who live in the Makekal River told me about a myth that says that they originate from a fruit named *Kelumpang*, which reincarnated into a woman who married a man from the Minangkabau who lived there and who was nicknamed *Bujang Perantau* (literally means wandering bachelor). Some of their descendants lived in Desa Tanah Garo, known as *Pangkal Waris*. According to the Orang Rimba in Makekal, the border between the Orang Rimba neighborhood and that of the Tanah Garo was determined by Sultan Thaha. The Sultan determined the boundaries to correspond with several rivers in the Bukit Dua Belas area.

Given the wide range of variations on the history of the Orang Rimba, my research follows the versions told by the Orang Rimba based on their customs and traditions. Some of them are reflected in the poems and myths following their origins and uniqueness that are still adopted up to date.

2.3 Ethnographic literature on the Orang Rimba

The old and recent literature on the Orang Rimba is quite extensive taking into account the size of this ethnic group. Since the appearance of the early reports about 'the wild Kubu' (as they were then called), dating back to the early decades of the 20th century, colonial ethnographers and civil servants have taken a serious interest in this nomadic group of hunter-gatherers. The Orang Rimba were commonly known as the Orang Kubu, which is associated with being dirty, vile, smelly, stinky, wild, and other negative images. Their modes of living, their simple forms of religion, and the 'silent trade' with the neighboring

Figure 9. Wild Kubu Tribe, Air Hitam Jambi
Source: Picture by Waterschoot van der Gracht (1915), with his original caption

Malay people were of particular interest because ethnographers thought that they had found an ethnic group that was living, as it was called at that time, 'at the bottom of civilization'. They were thought to be among the most primitive tribes that were still to be found on earth. In particular the articles by Van Dongen (1913), the monograph of Hagen (1908), and the articles by Volz (1909), and others strongly stimulated the interest of ethnographers and anthropologists interested in cultural evolution. Some of these writings, like those of Hagen and Visser (1939), as well as Van Waterschoot van der Gracht (1915) also had illustrations of the Kubu.

One of the interesting publications from this period is a short article by the mining engineer Van Waterschoot van der Gracht (1915), which also includes a few pictures. In November 1913 he was sent out to the Bukit Duabelas area to explore whether there were exploitable oil fields. He described the area as a dense jungle with paths made by elephants. But it was also the home territory of about 400 'wild Kubu' who were still living in 'the original wild state'. He described their simple huts, and what the people looked like, how they were dressed and what types of weapons they had. Because these people are the direct ancestors of the Orang Rimba that I studied, it is also interesting to mention here what he wrote about their food. Their staple food consisted of all kinds of wild tubers

of which he mentioned *banar, djangeh, koesoet* and *gdoeng.* Two types of water snails were collected: *tenkoejoeng* and *kalamboeai*. Wild pigs, porcupines, and various types of monkeys were the main game animals. Fish was caught with the help of poisonous roots. In addition, he also mentioned snakes, frogs, toads, and the rather big tortoises. From the *sialang* trees the people collected honey. The people were eager to receive rice but, according to Waterschoot van der Gracht, this was a luxury product which they usually only obtained through exchange trade.

According to Sager (2008), the Orang Rimba became of interest to anthropology because of their traditional non-Islamic religion and their ritual practices, which are oriented towards the seasonal cycles of rain, fruits, honey, and the migration of bearded pigs. The first ethnographic notes described them as the Orang Kubu (or Koeboe), which was used as a generic term for traditional ethnic groups in Central Sumatra. As noted by Persoon (1994: 135), the term Kubu itself reflects how the outside world viewed them as hiding from society at large (*mengubukan diri* means 'to hide oneself from other people'). They were described as a group which was able to survive in their environment with almost no need to interact with the outside world (see Weintre 2003). In the early twentieth century, Van Dongen's publications (in Weintre 2003:29-39) became the most extensive first-hand account of the Orang Rimba. Van Dongen (in Weintre 2003) gave an extensive account of the Orang Rimba and described in detail their economy, social beliefs, life-stage rituals, conceptions of the soul, and prayer songs sung during healing ceremonies. In an article titled *´Kubu Conceptions of Reality´*, the Norwegian anthropologist Sandbukt (1984) describes some of the forest–village divisions inherent in the Orang Rimba cosmology and religious beliefs; and gives a general outline of some of their gods, rituals, and shamanistic practices. The Dutch anthropologist Persoon published various articles on the Orang Rimba in the 1980s and 1990s, and devoted an extensive part of his dissertation to this ethnic group (1994). On the basis of visits to different camps throughout the region, he gives a general overview of Orang Rimba life and explores some of the effects of logging, establishment of plantations, resettlement projects, and an encroaching outside world on the Orang Rimba's way of life (1989, 1994, 2000).
Since Sandbukt and Persoon, the Indonesian anthropologist Muntholib Soetomo has performed doctoral fieldwork with the downstream Makekal Orang Rimba in Bukit Duabelas (see Soetomo 1995). Soetomo's thesis gives a very general and broad account of the Orang Rimba life, which is limited in many respects, but contains a great deal of interesting data on the Orang Rimba *adat* (customary) and legal codes. Elkholy, an American anthropologist, spent 20 months conducting doctoral fieldwork in the buffer zone of Bukit Tigapuluh National Park in the mid-1990s. Elkholy studied the Orang Rimba from an ecological-anthropological perspective that incorporated a phenomenological approach. The field study was done among the Orang Rimba living alongside the Gelumpang and Kemumu rivers, on the Bukit Tigapuluh border, in the northern part of Jambi. His monograph is one of several more recent publications on contemporary perspectives of the Orang Rimba that have become available (see Wardani 2007, 2011; Prasetijo 2011, 2015, Elkholy 2016; Persoon and Wardani 2017).
Mention must also be made of the research that was done within the framework of policy studies in preparation of development projects, such as the resettlement villages.

In particular the Department of Social Affairs has published a large number of studies that describe the conditions in which the Orang Rimba live. The outcome of such studies was used as a justification to start development activities among them in order to improve their situation in terms of health care, education, and modes of livelihood. The focus of these development activities was always aimed at the resettlement villages in which the Orang Rimba were supposed to start their new way of life as mainstream Indonesians. Such studies have been made since the 1960s (Departemen Sosial 1980, 1985, 1998a, 1998b).
One of the topics that appears in all ethnographic writings of the Orang Rimba, and that also has a large impact of the efforts to resettle them, is the tradition of *melangun* (see for instance Sandbukt 1984, Persoon 1994, Depsos 1991, 1993, and Sager 2006). *Melangun* is a mourning ritual that involves not just indulging in sorrow, but also making efforts to forget any misfortune or bad memories associated with the deceased. The ritual involves leaving the location that used to be the dwelling place and going to a faraway location as well as engaging in a merry-making activity that is aimed at enabling those still alive to erase their memories about the deceased. While practicing *melangun*, the Orang Rimba, especially the women, literally cry loudly for a few days. The local term for this is *meratop*. *Meratop* is a symbolic event marking the climax of the mourners letting go of the person who has passed away.[14]

Moreover, *melangun* is not just a ritual designed to break any emotional bonds with the deceased forever, it is also about creating a new social balance within the group. *Melangun* reflects the need for access to resources that sustain livelihoods. Wandering from one location to another has been a way for the Orang Rimba to guarantee access to adequate basic needs, especially in terms of economic benefits. Staying together for a long period increases the possibility of internal conflicts due to resource constraints. In addition, from a cultural identity point of view, this symbolic action affirms the autonomy of the Orang Rimba in relation to other societies.

The Orang Rimba population was not always as widely dispersed as it is now. In the past, when the forest was still unlogged, it was concentrated along the river basins of Air Hitam, Serenggam, Kejasung Kecil, Kejasung Besar, Makekal, Bernai, and Seranten, with the highest density in the area of the Makekal River Basin. Over time, however, and especially since the 2000s, the population has spread out to several areas as a consequence of illegal logging and land conversion. Today, massive penetration of forests is attributable to land-grabbing by transmigrants from Desa Rantau Limau Manis, Sei Jernih, Dusun Olak Kemang, Jernih, Dusun Baru, and Desa Lubuk Jering, as well as penetration by transmigrants in secondary forestry. In that sense, mobility of people of various river basins has become more common; indeed, one can say it is essential to the survival of the Orang Rimba.

The *tumenggung*, or the leader, is the person responsible for the movement of the group. However, sometimes the decision to move is influenced by the interests of the households

[14] *Melangun* is based on a fear for the dead among the Orang Rimba. As such it is certainly not a unique phenomenon. It is found among many other hunting and gathering communities but also among other types of societies. James Frazer (1933) has written extensively about the religious practices related to this fear for the dead.

and the dynamics of the relationships within the group (birth, marriage, death, or conflict). If staying in the same area as a group is seen as advantageous, they will stay together, and vice versa. In the case of *melangun*, for instance, the decision to move to another location or to leave the group is based on the decisions made by the women grieving in the group, i.e. a mother, a grandmother, a daughter, a sister, or a granddaughter. The males in the house often follow the women in their mourning and, in this process, they try to meet their needs as women occupy a very high and special position in the Orang Rimba social community. The general picture that emerges from this anthropological research is that the Orang Rimba live together in small groups that are formed from marital relationships and bloodline relationships in a matrilineal system. Their law system and social organization are different from those observed in the neighboring communities of predominantly Malay people. The livelihood of the Orang Rimba consists of hunting and gathering (with a little farming) to meet the subsistence needs of family units and groups. Forest degradation has had a substantial impact on the lives of the Orang Rimba. Given the ongoing expansion of rubber and oil palm plantations, forest degradation and deforestation will continue and may force the Orang Rimba to "get out from their hiding place". Hence, interaction with the outside world has become inevitable and will continue to increase in the future.

In the remaining part of this chapter, I will give a general overview of the conditions of the Orang Rimba in the Bukit Duabelas area as I have observed them during my fieldwork. Whenever relevant I will refer to relevant literature, but most of the descriptions are based on first-hand observations and interviews with the Orang Rimba, Malay informants, and staff members of NGOs. More specific details of each of the three groups that I studied will be given in Chapters III-IV.

2.4 Present-day living conditions of the Orang Rimba

Mobility and livelihood

The Orang Rimba live in groups ranging between five and twenty households. They see a small number of people as a means of stability and as a way to reduce the potential for internal conflicts, which are likely to increase as natural resources decline. Moreover, small groups suit the flexibility and fluidity required to maintain the *melangun* tradition.

The influx of migrants into the areas that the Orang Rimba used to call their ancestral home, has substantially modified their geographical landscape. Subsequent logging activities, legal and illegal alike, and the worsening forest degradation and decimation of biodiversity, have reduced the Orang Rimba's access to forest-based economic resources. To supplement these decreasing economic resources, the Orang Rimba have been forced to adjust their way of living. This has included, among other things, attempts to lead increasingly sedentary lives by cultivating rice and planting rubber seedlings.

While the Orang Rimba have maintained the norms and taboos inherited from their ancestors, interaction with other ethnic groups has also induced adoption of some 'outsider' norms and practices. The Orang Rimba have come to realize that they are not the only society that inhabits the vast terrain, but one among many and with ever

Figure 10. The Orang Rimba of Air Hitam on the way to SPI carrying rattan to sell, 2015

decreasing influence. Consequently, the Orang Rimba have grown accustomed to using money, clothes, mobile phones, motorbikes, growing rubber and oil palms, and eating rice. Despite such changes, they continue to uphold to some extent their traditional norms and taboos, which characterize their daily lives.

Although hunting and gathering are main sources of livelihood for most Orang Rimba groups, some of them have established small fields planted with rubber trees and other crops. While there has been little research so far on the farming activities of the Orang Rimba, farming appears to have become an increasingly important part of their lives over time. This is reflected in the taboos the Orang Rimba have with regard to farming. A fitting example involves the rituals called *kendawan balau* and *pago balau* that, according to my informants, were inherited from past generations. These two rituals involve the utterance of mantras or prayers in order to ward off pests and diseases that cause harm to crops.

Farming practices help the Orang Rimba to fulfill their daily food needs in terms of tubers like *gadung*, and *ubi junjung*, but also cassava, plantains, sugar cane, chili, and other traditional food. In addition, they have gained experience in growing upland rice, a

Figure 11. Orang Rimba compound in oil palm plantation, Tanah Garo, 2013
Source: KKI WARSI collection

practice learned from the transmigrants since the 1980s. While some Orang Rimba have experimented with making rice paddies, this did not last, because they found the process of rice cultivation too labor-intensive and troublesome. Today, many Orang Rimba rely on rubber plantations as a supplementary source of income.

Currently, there are a number of Orang Rimba who have settled down, while others still live a rather mobile life. They shift from one forest field to another every few years. The shift usually reflects various socio-political and economic conditions that lead to fusion and fission of groups. Some examples of reasons to move away from groups and merge with others are tensions caused when some group members want to confirm their relationship with other groups, the need to redistribute population in relation to resources, or the need to consolidate rights to resources in a certain location. In addition, there are also short-term shifts by nuclear families for economic and social reasons.

Hunting and fishing

Hunting and fishing are important activities for the procurement of food for the Orang Rimba. They hunt animals like mouse deer, deer, wild pig, tapir, squirrel, freshwater turtle, snake, and antelope. Hunting provides a vital source of animal protein, and the sharing of hunting proceeds is an important social strategy to prevent food shortage.

Hunting is exclusively a male job, in which no participation of women is accepted. It is done by an individual, as well as by small groups of individuals. Hunting activities often involve members of one nuclear family or other close relatives. Hunting must follow the traditional rules and customs such as the rule that all hunters must be “clean”, which means free from *denda adat* or custom fines. It must be noted that hunting not only

Figure 12. An Orang Rimba boy returns home bringing some squirrels, Pengelaworon group, 2014

Figure 13. The *labi-labi* (freshwater turtle) is being cut and divided by an Orang Rimba woman, Pengelaworon group, 2014

serves as a source of food but also as an initiation into adulthood for men. That is, an Orang Rimba man will be recognized as an adult after he succeeds in bringing home his first substantial catch.

Hunting proceeds from a communal hunting exercise are divided to be shared collectively by the female relatives of the hunters. This shows the authority of the female's position in the household as a decision-maker and a distributor of the game and reflects women's importance in the community. Hunting proceeds made by a single household are also shared with others, including members outside the group if the quantity warrants it.

In addition to the importance of hunting as a source of food, the Orang Rimba also sell the meat they hunt to middlemen in villages or to plantation officers. During my fieldwork, wild pig meat fetched an average price of Rp 4,000.00 (US$ 0.33) per kg, and usually comprised the lower parts of the pig's body without the head, offal, and limbs. Other types of bush meat fetched higher prices. For instance, deer was sold at IDR 70,000/kg (US$ 5.26/kg) and hedgehog for IDR 50,000/kg (US$ 3.76/kg).

One hunting expedition can produce roughly 40 kg of wild pig per person/group, but hunting yields vary depending on the season, location, human skills, and equipment/tools. Hunting is not done every day. It rather depends on the season and on the needs to earn

Figure 14.1 and 14.2. The Orang Rimba is taking a rest in the house of a middleman after selling a wild pig (left) and the Orang Rimba carrying a wild pig (right), 2006

money. Hunting is best in the rainy season and is done both in primary and secondary or logged-over forest, as well as in rubber and oil palm plantations, where wild pig is particularly abundant.

Previously hunting tools were limited to machetes[15], knives, and spears (*kujur* in the Orang Rimba language, which are still used by some hunters in Makekal Hulu), but most other Orang Rimba groups use a *kecepek*[16]. The introduction of this simple shotgun has allowed the Orang Rimba to also hunt other animals such as monkeys. These animals were extremely difficult to catch with their traditional tools as they usually stay in the canopy of the forest.

[15] All the iron parts of the tools are bought in the nearest markets/shops because the Orang Rimba do not produce iron tools. Machetes and knifes are the most commonly used tools. The Orang Rimba use 30-40 cm long machetes, which they store in their loincloths in the side of the waist. Machetes are used for many purposes such as cutting down small trees, cutting meat and fruits, for collecting non-timber forest products, and for uprooting wild tubers.

[16] *Kecepek* is a handmade gun for hunting animals such as wild pig, deer, and other mammals. It is bought from the local market. It is against Indonesian law to carry weapons without sheaths, but somehow the Orang Rimba have some privileges in this regard and may do so on special occasions like hunting. There are almost no reports of the misuse of weapons by the Orang Rimba with respect to the wider public. I only know of one accident happening during my fieldwork, which led to the death of an Orang Rimba youth in the Makekal Hilir area in December 2013.

Figure 15. An Orang Rimba man in Pamenang holding a *kecepek* (2006)

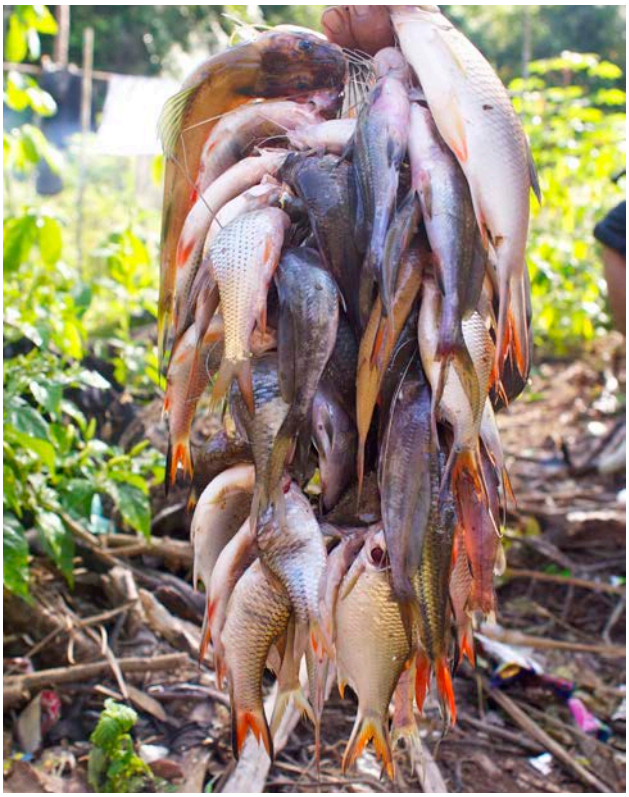

Figure 16. One-night fishing catch from Makekal River, Sako Tulang group (2013)

Figure 17. An Orang Rimba man sets up a net of fishing in Makekal River (2013)

Besides hunting tools, dogs are also used to assist the Orang Rimba in tracing animals such as wild pigs. The dogs make a small circle around the animal, after which the hunter can kill the animal with his spear. What is remarkable about the hunting tools of the Orang Rimba in comparison with other groups of hunter-gatherers is the absence of weapons like the bow-and-arrow or the blow pipe.
While hunters may also use snares and traps to catch small animals (like rats), traps are more commonly used in fishing to catch freshwater fish, freshwater turtles, and tortoises in dry riverbeds. Fishing is also done with the use of fishnets. The result of fishing is usually only sufficient to feed one household. The Orang Rimba fish mainly in the dry season and shallow riverbeds are the most important fishing sites. They also catch freshwater turtle or frogs from muddy parts of these riverbeds.

The most commonly used fishing technique used consists of net fishing in a downstream part of the river. The nets are laid out in the evening to catch the fish during nighttime. The fish are picked up in the morning. The efficiency of this method is limited; only small and medium-sized fish are caught. Moreover, this technique is only effective in slowly flowing and shallow streams.

Another fishing technique is the use of *tuba* or natural poison, taken from a variety of forest plants. This technique is locally called *menuba*. It is done in the dry season when the river is very shallow. There are many types of *tuba* which are derived from the sap

Figure 18. *Menuba* by an Orang Rimba man and woman in a shallow stream, Pengelaworon group (2014)

of either root (*tuba akar*), or wood (*tuba kayu*). It tranquilizes the fish and other aquatic animals, so that they are easy to catch. *Menuba* is done in an upstream area so that the fish will flow downstream into the baskets placed in the riverbed.

The Orang Rimba usually classify the animals they hunt and fish on the basis of size. For instance, key informants from the Air Hitam group differentiate between large size (*godong*), middle size (*sedang*), and small size (*kecik*) fish. Other classifications of animals like snakes, lizards, soft turtles, squirrels, bears, primates, birds, and bats are usually made on the basis of types of animals. It is interesting to note that the Air Hitam group considers primates and rats as taboo animals, while another group (such as Terab) consider those animals as edible. The differences came from the preference of the animal supplies. Based on the three groups studied, the differences and preferences apply to all group members. This means that the Sako Tulang group may have different preferences to the Terab group and Air Hitam group, and the other way around.

Gathering for subsistence is mainly limited to a number of wild tubers (*diascorea* species) such as *benor* and *gadung*, which continue to grow as long as substantial parts of the root system are kept during the digging out of the tubers.[17] Meanwhile *ubi* (tuber), *keladi* (taro), and *tebu* (sugar cane) are classified as cultivated plants. In addition, at least 15 kinds of fruits are collected, the taste of which ranges from sweet and mildly sweet to mildly sour and sour. This will be further discussed in the section on seasonality. However, the Orang Rimba have also long been involved in the collection of a range of non-timber forest products for trade purposes, the most important of which are honey, rattan and *jernang* (dragon's blood)[18]. Such products have for centuries been traded with intermediaries (see the section on *jenang* and *waris* in this chapter).

Seasons

To the Orang Rimba, the year consists of two seasons; this causes their livelihood to be characterized by a two-season cycle as well. The first of these seasons is the *gantung tungku* season, which literally means 'hanging up the cooking stove' (*remayo/sesaro/melarang* or the hardship period), and which corresponds with the dry season. The second, corresponding with the rainy season, is the *hagom/hagop* season. This season is considered a period of merriment that is favorable for obtaining a good harvest from nature. The start of this season is indicated by the first honey harvest from the *sialang* trees. It is also called *petanggungan godong,* which means 'big fruit season', because many fruits are available at the same time.

[17] See Sandbukt (1988) for further reading on foraging staples of the Orang Rimba.

[18] Jernang or dragon's blood (*daemonorhops hyigrophilus*) is a highly valuable product from the Bukit Duabelas forest. Originally from Africa, its resin is used for many purposes such as medicine, dyes, varnish and incense. *Jernang* is a resin type that comes from the fruits of specific rattan species. The most common in Sumatra comes from the species of *daemonorops*. These palm trees are rare and grow slowly. The resin (red resin) comes from the scales of the fruits just before they have matured. We call it dragon's blood because of the deep red colour that exudes from the bark after the trees are wounded. It is a very lucrative product, fetching a price of Rp 800,000.00 – Rp 1,200,000,000 or 60.08-90.12 USD per kilogramme.

Figure 19. An Orang Rimba boy carries durians, Air Hitam (2015)

Seasons are of great importance in the livelihoods of the Orang Rimba, especially with respect to food availability and vulnerability. The Orang Rimba's livelihoods are highly dependent on this seasonal cycle. For instance, they only do collective hunting trips in the *hagom* season. In the same period, they collect honey and fruits. In the season of *gantung tungku* they concentrate more on farming activities (tubers, rubber, and other commodities).

Gantung tungku constitutes a period of food shortages and difficulties. The season marks a period in the year when the Orang Rimba consider nature to be very difficult to them to find food, with all kinds of hardships including difficulties in obtaining fish and meat. All activities become hard and food scarcity reaches its height. In contrast, during *hagom* (*hagop*) the forest provides all kinds of products in abundance. Hunting activities are usually successful, and cultivation activities are equally bountiful. This is the season when the Orang Rimba are not worried about food, since nature becomes a very benevolent provider.

Fruits take a special position in the context of scarcity and abundance. Fruit is locally known as *nuaron* and the Orang Rimba distinguish between two broad categories, namely *buah tutuhon* (picked fruit) and *buah labuh ke tano* (fallen fruit). *Buah tutuhon* includes rambutan, *duku*, *benton*, banana, and so on. *Buah labuh ke tano* includes durian, *buntor*, mango and others. *Buah labuh ke tano* follows the bee migration. When the migration is coming from the east and moves to the west, an abundant harvest (*petanggungan godong*) will follow. This happens once in two or three years. On the other hand, if the migration of the bee comes from the west and moves to the east, the harvest of *buah labuh di tano* is limited. That is called *petahunan melarang*.

The Orang Rimba prefer the so-called fallen fruits.[19] When the fruit season comes, the group constructs temporary shelters close to the trees with the ripening fruits in order to gather them. However, the Orang Rimba have to compete with a number of wild animals that also have a great appetite for these fruits. These animals include various species of monkeys, birds, sun bears, and wild pigs.[20] A problem is that since fruit is consumed in great quantities and the fruit season (October to February) also happens to be the rainy season, Orang Rimba become vulnerable to diarrhea. In addition, malaria and fever are also connected to this period.

More generally, *remayo* refers to periods when the Orang Rimba encounter serious hardships. This can be in the dry and the rainy season. *Melangun*[21] is particularly associated with *remayo*. For instance, if a group member dies while the Orang Rimba are preparing land for planting, the land is abandoned, and the group becomes fully reliant on the forest. The Orang Rimba refer to this hardship condition as *remayo*.

[19] See Sandbukt 1988.

[20] Ibid.

[21] It is important to note here the difference between *melangun* and *remayo*. While *melangun* is mobile activities and movement to other locations, conducted by the Orang Rimba due to the death of family or group members, *remayo* indicates a hardship period in a wider scope, which includes melangun, economic difficulties, social conflicts, and other such hardship events.

2.5 Material culture

Types of housing

For the Orang Rimba, home is where the forests exist, as the forest is the most important part of their cultural identity and their most important source of livelihood. Moreover, based on the Orang Rimba cosmology there are three different worlds that guide their lives. These worlds are *halom nio* (their existence in this world), *halom dewo* (a permanent place for eternal life after death, which is also the place for the gods and the goddesses), and *dunia kapir* or the place for the '*kafir*'/unbeliever which is placed under the ground (see Sandbukt 1984, Prasetijo 2011). All aspects of the Orang Rimba life follow this cosmology, including the way they build their houses.

The Orang Rimba can live and stay anywhere in the forest as long as it does not conflict with their customs and beliefs. The first line of the poem at the beginning of this chapter, '*beratap cikai, bedinding bener….*', means that the Orang Rimba live under a roof made of *cikai* leaves and between buttresses. The interpretation of this poem is that it is forbidden to have a house with walls. Most of the Orang Rimba stick to this belief up to the present day.

Since mobility is a key characteristic of the Orang Rimba way of life, individual households are scattered along the path of rivers and streams. There are four types of houses, namely *bolalapion, sesudungon, rumah ditano* and *rumah godong,* which will be explained below (see also Prasetijo 2013, Qulub 2016).

The simplest housing type for the Orang Rimba is the *bolalapion*. It is used for temporary shelter during hunting trips or while traveling during short periods of time (one or two nights). It is a very small shelter, about 2 x 2 meters in surface, and it only accommodates two persons. The construction is simple. It can be built in less than one hour by one man. It uses two small branches with a single roof (*hatop*) of leaves and the floor is made from piles of dried leaves. The name of *bolalapion* is derived from the word "*lapik"*, which means pad. Internationally such a house type is known as a 'lean-to' (Porath and Persoon 2008).

The second and most common type of housing of the Orang Rimba is the *sesudungon*. A *sesudungon* is constructed of four small branches of wood (for about 4-5 cm thick for about one and a half up to two meters high) with a simple roof. Nowadays, the roof is made of plastic materials rather than leaves. Plastic sheets are more practical because they are more durable and lighter and easier to carry. These sheets can be bought at affordable prices in the local market or in shops. The *sesudungon* is particularly useful if the group is doing *melangun* or opening or tending to a rubber field. The size of the *sesudungon* depends on the family who will use it. However, the most typical size of the *sesudungon* is 3 x 2 meters for a maximum of three occupants. With this size, it takes two men around one to two hours to build such a house. The *sesudungon* is similar to a *bolalapion*, but it is bigger. Another difference is the floor pad that is made from thin branches that are tied together using rattan or wood fiber to the four main branches. A *sesudungon* can last for a few weeks or even months, depending on its use. *Sesudungon* originally comes from the word "*susudung*", which means camp house.

Figure 20. Four types of housing of the Orang Rimba. Notes (clockwise rotation): picture no. 1: *Bolalapion*, picture no. 2: *Sesudungon*, picture no. 3: *Rumah ditano*, picture no. 4: *Rumah godong*

Figure 21. *Sesudongon* in Pengelaworon group (2014)

A *rumah ditano* is bigger than a *sesudongon* and it is of a more permanent structure using larger wooden poles. These houses have functional rooms, such as a living room and private room. It is important to note here that the segregation of the rooms in the three houses is not based on the walls of a typical house, since the Orang Rimba do not use walls in their housing structures. Instead, the structure is determined by the construction of the floor and a thin layer of bamboo, bark, or wood that separates the rooms. A *rumah ditano* means a house that is attached to the ground.

A *rumah godong* or a 'big house' is completely different from a *bolalapion*, a *sesudungon* and a *rumah ditano*. It is untypical for the Orang Rimba to have such a house, which resembles the Malay style of housing, which is larger and also uses walls. The roof is made from zinc or leaves and the walls are made from wood fiber, bamboo, or bark. The floor is made from thin branches or bamboos that are tied together with rattan. It is built in the middle of a piece of cleared land that will be used for rubber trees. This is the underlying reason why the Orang Rimba adopted a Malay style of house with walling: it is to protect them from the wind, the rain, and the heat of the sun.
Apart from the differences in the material construction of these different house types, there are also differences in the ways the houses are used by men and women. Both *rumah ditano* and *rumah godong* are divided by gender. For instance, the houses for women/girls (*rumah betina*) have a lower floor compared to houses for men/boys (*rumah jenton*). There is a strict regulation that a *rumah betina* may not be used for guests of the opposite sex. A violation of this rule can be interpreted as a love affair and such a violation may be subject to a fine of 20 loincloths (or *kain*, see below). Recently, some Orang Rimba have opted to stay close to their rubber fields in *rumah ditano* or *rumah godong* housing. Living in *rumah ditano* or *rumah godong* is usually a sign of a sedentary household, which means a less nomadic way of life. In the *rumah godong*, there are rooms for men and for women. It also has a small veranda at the back of the house. For instance, these two types of houses are common in the Sako Tulang group for instance, which reflects their close attachment to their rubber and oil palm plantations.
The hearth is located just outside the main house, except in the case of the *rumah godong* which has a hearth inside the house. The cooking pot hangs on a stick above the burning fire wood. Usually, a small amount of dry fire wood is kept under the house. In the smaller house types, the storing place for food, clothes, and equipment is the bamboo or wooden frame of the roof. Tubers and other food products are stored in baskets made of rattan. Cooked food that is not directly consumed is stored in cooking pots. Water is fetched from the small rivers and kept in plastic containers.
The houses are scattered in one compound for one group. The distance between the houses depends on the types of housing. In the case of *sesudungon*, the distance is usually not more than two up to three meters, but it is bigger in the case of *rumah ditano* and *rumah godong*. Field houses are always stand-alone constructions. It is rare to find a variety of house types within a single settlement.

Cloth *(Kain)*
The outfit of Orang Rimba men has always been the loincloth, which is closely related to their identity. Originally it was made from tree bark, but nowadays the men wear Javanese

Figure 22. An Orang Rimba woman cooks rice in Sako Tulang (2013)

Figure 23. An Orang Rimba woman hanging out clothes, Pengelaworon group, 2014

batik *sarong*, called *kain*, tied as a loincloth. They are widely available at local markets. Several references describe how loincloths were introduced among the Orang Rimba by their *jenang* (see Prasetijo 2011, Sager 2008). The loincloth for men (*kancut* or *cawot*) covers their genitals. In the past the women also wore a loincloth just like the men did but nowadays their clothing depends on their status. Married women wear a *kain* around their waist, which also covers the upper parts of their legs. Unmarried women wear *kemben* that covers the body from their chest to their knees. Children are typically uncovered by clothes until they are about two or three years old. Then the boys start wearing a *kancut*, and the girls will wear a *kemben*. Although Orang Rimba nowadays often wear clothes to cover their full body, especially whenever they are outside the forest, when they return home, many prefer to wear *kain*.

However, the value of *kain* is not limited to covering the body. The cloths also have various social meanings. For instance, during *melangun*, the *jenang* would give *pembujuk* (payments or 'bribes') to the Orang Rimba, so that the Orang Rimba are willing to come back to his "territory". The loincloths also show the empathy of the *jenang* to the family members who lost (one of) their loved ones. In this case, the cloths are given to the Orang Rimba along with food supplies and plastic roofing sheets.

The cloths are also used as a bride price. Before getting married, an Orang Rimba man spends time to serve his future parents in law (bride service), usually for a number of years. In addition, he is obliged to give cloths to the bride before the wedding. The number of cloths given depends on the ability of the groom. If the groom gives plenty of cloths to the bride, he will be more respected by his in-laws. Based on my observation during fieldwork, the average number of cloths for a bride service is about 60 *kains*[22].
The cloths also can be used as payment of custom fines. Basically, there are two kinds of custom fines among the Orang Rimba, namely fines that relate to social violations and fines related to abuse of natural resources. These two violations have to be resolved through a *sidang adat*, or a custom assembly, resulting in a payment of a fine using cloths as the unit of payment. Social violations include marriage problems, divorces, trading disputes, custom disobedience, and so on. Fines related to violations with respect to natural resources usually deal with the cutting down of sacred trees, which is mostly done by outsiders. The highest fine applies to cutting down a *kedundong* tree, which holds beehives. This may cost 500 cloths, equal to the fine for a murder crime or *sebangun nyawo*, which literally means 'one soul worth'.

Finally, the number of cloths a person owns reflects his wealth and power. Those who have plenty of *kain* store them in *the rumah godong* or in other secured places (such as field offices of WARSI[23]), which is especially handy because it is unpractical to carry around large numbers of *kain* during moves from one settlement to another. Even though money is becoming increasingly important, for the payment of bride price and fines, *kain* still are highly valued by most Orang Rimba, including the three groups in this research.

[22] The price of a piece of sarong *kain* during the fieldwork in 2013 was Rp 60,000 –65,000 or $US 4.6 - 5.
[23] WARSI has at least four field offices that are used as storing place for the Orang Rimba.

2.6 Non-material culture

Social organization

One remarkable and puzzling aspect of Orang Rimba society is its political and social organization. Not only is it very different from other societies in Indonesia, it also differs from most egalitarian hunter-gatherer societies, which generally do not have a layered political structure as the Orang Rimba have. The Orang Rimba have a distinct political power structure, rules that members must follow, norms that must be abided by, and social dictates that members must comply with, which have remained basically intact for centuries.

It is worth noting, however, that historically the Orang Rimba followed a simpler political structure, which is more typical for egalitarian hunter-gatherers (Prasetijo 2011). The political positions that are described below (*tumenggung*, *wakil*, *depati*, etc.) have only emerged since Sultan Thaha's era in the 18th century (ibid). It is also important to note here that the political structure of the Orang Rimba is not based on hierarchical relationships, but rather underpinned by the functions and responsibilities each position has in the group. Any issue that requires problem- solving is discussed at the group level. The aim is to arrive at a consensus, and the political structure helps to facilitate this process.

Based on interviews with key informants, the political 'power' structure begins with the *penghulu*. *Penghulu* is a collective name for a number of positions charged with the task of managing and guiding the lives of the Orang Rimba. The *penghulu* comprises the positions of *tumenggung*, deputy *(wakil)*, *depati*, *mangku*, *debalang*, and *menti*. The following is a detailed account of the responsibilities vested in the *penghulu*:

- The *tumenggung* holds the most venerable position among the Orang Rimba. Each group has its own *tumenggung* who is autonomous and independent of other *tumenggung* representing other groups within the Orang Rimba society. He represents his group in forums of other groups of Orang Rimba, as well as in meetings involving the Orang Rimba and outside communities. The *tumenggung* issues permits granting entry into Orang Rimba territory or for people merely wanting to interact with them. He is also the person responsible for making decisions that concern the Orang Rimba's interests. In the group there is usually also someone who can replace the *tumenggung*, his deputy or *wakil*, in case he cannot perform his duties.
- The *depati* is charged with the responsibility of handling legal and judicial issues.
- The *debalang* is responsible for maintaining stability among the Orang Rimba and to avoid or solve local disputes.
- The *menti* is charged with conveying information to all members of the group, for example, informing the Orang Rimba of an impending gathering. It is a little bit like a public relations officer, albeit limited to members within the group. He has a very difficult role considering the fact that the Orang Rimba are spread over a wide area, and he has to convey information to each and every member of the group.

In brief, the *penghulu* mainly manages the relations between the Orang Rimba and external communities and institutions. In addition, there are *tengganai* and *malim* who

handle internal issues. Both these positions grant them as much power as the *penghulu*. The following is a detailed description of the duties and responsibilities of the *tengganai* and *malim*:

- The *tengganai* gives customary advice and resolves family disputes (for instance, marriage issues) as well as other family issues. While the *tumenggung* manages external affairs/relations between outside parties and the Orang Rimba, the *tengganai* handles issues within the group.
- The *malim* or *alim* is the spiritual leader for the Orang Rimba groups. His role and influence are immense in the society. A *malim* officiates in marriage ceremonies and during rituals at births and deaths. In addition, the Orang Rimba believe he has the power to intercede for the living with the souls of their ancestors.

Jenang* and *waris

A long-standing relationship between the Orang Rimba and the Orang Melayu started in the sultanate (Sultan Thaha) era in the 18th century. At that time, two major groups of people were recognized in Jambi, namely the Orang Ulu and the Orang Ilir (see Prasetijo 2011). *Ulu* means upstream and is associated with mountainous and forestry areas, and *ilir* refers to the downstream area, which is more developed and was in the past close to the sultan's bureaucracy. The love-hate relationship between *ulu* and *ilir* was a result of the fact that both parties actually needed each other. The Orang Ilir needed the natural products that the Orang Ulu could produce, like the wide range of non-timber forest products. In addition, the Orang Ulu could also provide manpower. Meanwhile, the Orang Ulu needed consumer goods from the Orang Ilir that they could not produce themselves, such as cloths, salt, sugar, cigarettes, and agriculture tools. Together with the Orang Bathin and the Talang Mamak, the Orang Rimba were classified as Orang Ulu.

To remove the barriers between *ulu* and *ilir*, the sultan installed a kind of intermediate person between the downstream and upstream people, called *jenang*. In short, the *jenang* was the representative of the sultan in all corners and parts of the region, especially in remote areas. He was charged with the task of handling issues on the sultan's behalf. The *jenang* also had the right to collect certain taxes (*suntung naik/serah*) from the Orang Rimba and other forest-dwelling peoples. In return, the *jenang*, as a representative of the sultan, was obliged to give protection to the entire population (*jajah turun*).

However, things did not go according to plan. Gaining people's trust proved very difficult due to the Orang Rimba's previous traumatic experiences. These bad experiences related to the practice by the Orang Ilir of turning Orang Ulu into mistresses and slaves, because the latter were considered inferior to the former. This included the Orang Rimba, who were considered to be dirty, stupid, poor, and uncivilized. Thus, because of the dark past, the Orang Rimba opted for silent trade of forest-products (Persoon 1989; Sandbukt 1988) with the *jenang* (Prasetijo 2011). Such (silent) exchange happened as follows: the Orang Rimba would place their forest produce in specific locations, after which they hid somewhere and waited for the arrival of "modern" products, without making any contact or meeting parties from the other side of the "transaction".

In an effort to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of his power, the *jenang* or *waris* established a political structure among the Orang Rimba, who were traditionally very mobile and widely spread in the Bukit Duabelas area. Consequently, positions

such as *tumenggung*, *depati*, *mangku*, and *menti* emerged. Initially, there were only four *ketumenggungan* (area divisions with a leader in each area) in the Bukit Duabelas area, namely Air Hitam, Kejasung, Makekal Hilir, and Makekal Hulu (see Aritonang 1997; Prasetijo 2011). However, as the relations between the Orang Rimba and other parties intensified, the number of *ketumenggungan* also increased. Based on the above account, I assume that the existing political structure of the Orang Rimba is not the result of an internal evolutionary process, but rather the creation of outsiders. Currently, the Bukit Duabelas area is divided in seven *ketumenggungan.*

The advent of the Dutch colonial era saw a strengthening of the roles of the *jenang* and *waris*. This was because forest products in general and commodities like rubber in particular were considered vital in Jambi. There was a big demand for these products in the international market. Consequently, the *jenang* and *waris* became even more important during the colonial period.

The close attachment of the Orang Rimba to their *jenang* and *waris* is still visible today, in various degrees, with the most visible practice in the area of Tanah Garo (western part of Bukit Duabelas). This is because the Orang Rimba in Tanah Garo depend on rubber for their livelihoods and they need the *jenang* and *waris* to act as middlemen in the sale of their rubber. The Dutch introduced rubber in this area in 1939 (see Amilda 1999). Prior to that, the majority of the Tanah Garo people lived by hunting and gathering forest products, such as *damar* (resin), *rotan* (rattan), and *jernang.* Later the logging industry became more important. During the 1960s and late 1970s, rubber planting boomed, increasing the Orang Rimba's dependency on rubber gardens.

Compared with other groups, the Orang Rimba of Makekal Hilir have the strongest ties with their *jenang-waris*. However, before going deeper into this discussion, it is necessary to differentiate between the *jenang* and the *waris*. As explained, the *jenang* is an intermediary between the Orang Rimba and the outside world. The *jenang* embodies the economic interest between both parties. Meanwhile, the *waris* is the guardian of the Orang Rimba, whose role goes beyond economic interests and goes as far as handling family matters. *Waris* are Orang Melayu who are considered to have had family (blood) relations with the Orang Rimba in the past.
One of the elements of the *seloka adat* (customary law) of the Orang Rimba refers to the relationship between the Orang Rimba and their *jenang*/*waris*. Citing the law in the local language "Pangkal Waris Tanah Garo, Ujung Waris Tanah Serengam, Air Hitam Tanah Berjenang" (Aritonang 1999), the law reflects at least four meanings. Firstly, it relates to the scope of the area where the Orang Rimba live, i.e. the forest areas in Tanah Garo (the western part of Bukit Duabelas), Serengam (central part of Bukit Duabelas), and Air Hitam (southern part of Bukit Duabelas). Secondly, it is an affirmation of the authority of the *jenang* and the *waris* among the Orang Rimba. In this sense, *waris* are those who have authority to "lead" the Orang Rimba in Tanah Garo and Serengam. Meanwhile *jenang* are those who "control" the Orang Rimba in Air Hitam. Thirdly, *jenang* and *waris* are regarded as those individuals who have the power to connect the Orang Rimba with outsiders. Fourthly, *jenang* and *waris* are those individuals who have the obligation to solve

problems of the Orang Rimba, with respect to their internal and external conflicts. This *seloka* is always mentioned at every meeting or in every discussion (*sidang*) among the Orang Rimba, whether the issue under discussion concerns internal or external affairs. Just like many other important *seloka,* this *seloka* has been passed on from one generation to the other for centuries. The Orang Rimba consider the *seloka* as an important legal basis that they inherited from their ancestors.

According to the Orang Rimba of Makekal Hilir, *waris* means *sanak betina* or family members who share the wife's blood relations. As the Orang Rimba profess a matrilineal system, the *waris* plays an important role because he is responsible for all aspects of the Orang Rimba's lives. For example, a *waris* takes full responsibility whenever anything happens that affects the Orang Rimba. He pays the Orang Rimba's debts if they have difficulties in repaying their obligations. Thus, the *waris*' responsibility includes personal and family problems and beyond. The Orang Rimba venerate *waris* as revered family or their guardian angels. In return, the Orang Rimba dedicate part of their produce to their *waris*. To make a brief distinction between the *jenang* and the *waris*, we can say that the *jenang* only controls the economic interest, while the role of the *waris* is much larger. During my fieldwork, the most respected *waris* in Tanah Garo passed away. According to customary rules, the position of *waris* must be passed on to the next generation of the previous *waris*. However, the children of Sayuti are not keen on taking the *waris* position and prefer a political role in the village. Now, one of the sons of the late *waris* is the village chief (*kepala desa*) in Tanah Garo and is planning to run for the legislative position in Tebo District. Consequently, the relationship between the Orang Rimba and their *waris* in Tanah Garo has changed.[24]

The downside of the role played by the *jenang* and the *waris* lies in the fact that rather than upholding the Orang Rimba interests, they often put their own interests at the forefront of their activities. They do whatever it takes to maintain their stranglehold on the Orang Rimba's resources. To achieve that, they constantly redefine their role. Today, they no longer represent the sultan and/or other current authorities but are more occupied with economic interests.

This history, which is supported by the scientific literature (see Sandbukt 1984; Persoon 1989; Prasetijo 2007; Sager 2008; Wardani 2011), provides us with ample evidence that the Orang Rimba are not as isolated as many people tend to think. In fact, the Orang Rimba have been connected with the outside world for centuries, and these relations have contributed to the present livelihood of the Orang Rimba directly and indirectly. The intensity of this contact has grown enormously in recent times, and particularly since the late 1980s. Over the last four to five decades, the acceleration of development in the Jambi Forest corridor, attributable to the construction of roads, has made direct interaction between the Orang Rimba and other communities increasingly commonplace. Moreover, the "invisible hand" of the market continues to transform their livelihoods.

24 See the discussion on how waris have been transformed in Chapter III.

2.7 Civil society's concern for the Orang Rimba

The considerable attention paid to the Orang Rimba often emanates from and is hyped up by popular media, such as newspapers, television stations, books, and recently also films (for example, Manurung 2013 and Riza 2013). One of the reasons why the Orang Rimba receive comparatively more attention than other indigenous groups in Indonesia is to be attributed to the commitment and efforts of a local NGO in Jambi called WARSI[25], which has been working in the area for nearly 25 years to improve the living conditions of the Orang Rimba through various programs. WARSI endeavors to enhance the Orang Rimba's awareness and understanding of the problems and pressures they face. An enhanced awareness of their condition should pave the way for Orang Rimba, facilitated by the NGO, to suggest practical solutions. The hope is that, in the long run, the Orang Rimba themselves will be at the forefront of efforts to get the government to observe their rights to land[26].

One of the programs involves efforts tailored to understanding the various pressures and the ever-decreasing forest habitat in particular. Other programs involve providing quality education and improving the Orang Rimba's poor health. A survey conducted by WARSI in 2006 among roughly 1,500 Orang Rimba individuals in TNBD found 405 cases of a range of diseases. The most common of these were upper respiratory tract infections, skin infections and unspecified muscle/bone problems (see Table 6). To my knowledge, this is the best available data on Orang Rimba health to date.

WARSI further aims to support the Orang Rimba in halting the pressures confronting them, especially those that arise from logging practices and expansion of plantation activities in their territory. For instance, in collaboration with the Orang Rimba, the NGO has developed a bridgehead garden or *hompongon*[27] along the fringes of forests aimed at forestalling the encroachment of the farming population into the forests.

This effort is also designed to ensure that forest products, such as rubber, long cultivated by the Orang Rimba, can be developed in a sustainable manner to provide both them and their offspring with resources in the long term. Since the establishment of the *hompongon*, the number of rubber trees grown in the TNBD by the Orang Rimba has mushroomed. Besides such efforts, WARSI also provides training and arranges exchange visits with other Indonesian forest-dwelling communities in order to enhance their mutual

[25] WARSI is a non-government organisation established on 27 December 1991 by a number of inter-disciplinary and inter-genre activists that share the same views in the area of natural resource management. WARSI promotes a new approach to natural resource management in the national park areas through community conservation. Its motto is "conservation with the community", with a focus on the empowerment of the indigenous peoples (such as the Orang Rimba, the Batin Sembilan, the Talang Mamak, the Dayak, and the Punan). WARSI manages funds from national and international donor organisations (https://warsi.or.id/profile-en/).

[26] Government policies on forest land use and the Agrarian Law 1960 do not recognize minorities' rights to land.

[27] *Hompongon* means the boundary of a rectangular-shaped field and indicates the rights to a field an individual has and the types of crops that can be grown on the four sides of the field. *Hompong* means four, which is a reflection of four essential elements of life for the Orang Rimba. The four elements are the river, the world of the Orang Melayu, the world of deities, and the life of the Orang Rimba.

Figure 24. A local doctor from Pauh district makes a visit to the Terab group (2013)

Figure 25. A doctor and health facilitators from Pauh district in cooperation with WARSI during a lunch break among the Terab group (2013)

understanding of shared problems and of the environment.
WARSI has also been instrumental in arranging a number of meetings between one of the Orang Rimba leaders, *Tumenggung* T, with high officials in Jakarta. This has happened a couple of times. *Tumenggung* T has also received environmental awards, like the Kehati award for 'sustainable forest management' and the Kalpataru award for 'nature conservation'. In his capacity as the Orang Rimba leader he received these awards from former presidents Megawati Sukarnoputri and Suliso Bambang Yudhoyono. The Department of Social Affairs has also tried to make him a role model for a 'modern Orang Rimba', with a decent house in a modern settlement, and they have tried to convert him into a devout Muslim (Prasetijo 2015; Persoon and Wardani 2017). However, for most Orang Rimba the life of modern urban centers with all its opportunities and challenges is unknown. They spend most of their time in the strongly modified rural landscape of Central Jambi and its adjacent villages without integration into Malay or Javanese transmigrant communities.

WARSI is also involved in providing training in literacy, health, and sanitation to Orang Rimba youth. Basic education is mainly intended to equip the Orang Rimba with the requisite knowledge to participate in negotiations with 'external' parties regarding transactions in rubber and other non-timber forest products, and in the purchase of their necessities. Better negotiation skills are crucial in fetching better prices for their

Table 6. Types of diseases found among 1,500 Orang Rimba in Bukit Duabelas (2006)

No.	Types of diseases	Case	Percentage
1.	Upper Respiratory Tract Infection	109	27
2.	Skin infection	88	22
3.	Muscle and bone problem	61	15.1
4.	Malaria	33	8.1
5.	Respiratory disorders	27	6.7
6.	Fever	26	6.4
7.	Diarrhea	17	4.2
8.	Mouth teeth problems	11	2.7
9.	Anemia	9	2.2
10.	Headache	8	2
11.	Worm	6	1.5
12.	Hepatitis	3	0.7
13.	Vascular problems	2	0.4
14.	Cataract	1	0.2
15.	Vomiting blood	1	0.2
16.	Urinary tract infection	1	0.2
17.	Herpes simplex	1	0.2
18.	Hemorrhoid	1	0.2
	Total	**405**	**100**

Source: KKI WARSI, calculated by the author, 2006

Figure 26. The Orang Rimba in the hompongon, Pengelaworon group (2014)

forest products. Moreover, WARSI hopes that such education will contribute to the Orang Rimba's preservation of the forests.

Another NGO that deserves mention here is *Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara* (AMAN) or the Alliance of Indigenous Peoples of the Archipelago that was founded in 1999 shortly after the fall of President Suharto. Specifically, in the case of the Orang Rimba, through AMAN, the Orang Rimba have been afforded the opportunity to ventilate their voices at the national level at the annual meeting of *masyarakat adat*, organized by the alliance. In general, AMAN has a keen interest in the broader issue of ensuring the survival and sustainability of indigenous peoples in Indonesia. As Li (2001) notes, AMAN and its alliances provide support for the lives and well-being of *masyarakat adat* as minority groups (in terms of population numbers) in Indonesia, also because of the constant external pressures and forest degradation. These pressures have resulted in *masyarakat adat* in Indonesia losing their identity and, in turn, their cultural distinctiveness in Indonesia. Quoting Li (2001: 645):

"AMAN and its supporters assert cultural distinctiveness as the grounds for securing rights to territories and resources threatened by forestry, plantation, and mining interests backed by police and military intimidation. Their attempt to place the problems of 'masyarakat adat' on the political agenda has been remarkably successful. While seven years ago the head of the national land agency declared that the category *masyarakat adat*, which had some significance in colonial law, was defunct or withering away (Kisbandono 18/02/93), the term now appears ever more frequently in the discourse of activists, parliamentarians, media, and government officials dealing with forest and land issues."

Figure 27. A muddy road to the Pengelaworon group (2014)

It can be said, however, that WARSI's efforts have undeniably triggered efforts by others. One good example is the work of Butet Manurung, a former WARSI staff member. Butet is well-known as an individual who is heavily involved in alternative education for *masyarakat adat* across Indonesia. Her concerns were triggered by her experiences as she worked in WARSI's youth education programs. Since then, she has written a book relating her personal stories about implementing alternative education for the Orang Rimba's youth and the formation of her own NGO, called *Sokola Rimba*. In 2015, in cooperation with a well-known film producer and director in Indonesia, Butet turned her story into a film entitled 'Sokola Rimba'. She is often invited by national television stations and newspapers to provide insight on the Orang Rimba's present conditions and their well-being (Manurung 2013, Riza 2013).

Aside from individual efforts by people like Butet, the media also often broadcast short news bulletins or documentaries on the state of the Orang Rimba. Some public intellectuals and reporters routinely write news on the conditions of the Orang Rimba, in particular *Kompas* and the *Jakarta Post*, two of the country's leading newspapers. *Kompas* correspondent Irma Tambunan, who is based in Jambi, is specifically assigned the task of reporting news about the Orang Rimba. *Kompas* has also designated an occasional space to academics and activists, who publish short articles and opinion pieces on issues concerning the Orang Rimba. The *Jakarta Post* (an English newspaper in Indonesia) regularly sends its journalists to Jambi to report on special Orang Rimba events and it occasionally designates space for opinion columns written by those who are interested in Orang Rimba issues. Metro TV, Kompas TV and other national television stations also occasionally broadcast special reports on Orang Rimba related issues.

2.8 Designation of the Bukit Duabelas National Park

In 2000 the Bukit Duabelas Forest area, which stretches for more than 60,500 hectares, was designated as a national park with the assistance of WARSI. The establishment of the TNBD was implemented with the Ministry of Forestry decision statement No. 258/Kpts-II/2000. Before this statement was issued, about 27,200 hectares of the TNBD had already been designated as a biosphere reserve,[28] based on the Governor of Jambi's decision No. 522 in 1984. Thanks to almost 16 years of lobbying by WARSI, the government of Indonesia finally granted the Bukit Duabelas area a national park status.[29] The issuing of the decision statement provided a solid legal foundation for the Orang Rimba living in Bukit Duabelas area, as the TNBD is the only national park that is reserved for the exclusive use of *masyarakat adat*. Following this decision, the government, represented by the Ministry of Forestry, also issued a policy in the form of a management plan for Bukit Duabelas National Park.

The management plan needs a long process to be developed and implemented. It started in 1984 when Bupati Sarolangun or Head of the District Sarolangun issued the Decision

[28] The biosphere reserve was designed for scientific research related to forestry issues.

[29] This is based on various unpublished Warsi program reports and from interviews with Warsi staff.

Letter or *Surat Keputusan* No. 522/182/1984 on 7 February 1984 proposing to the Governor of Jambi to give privilege to the Orang Rimba to live in the area of the national park, both inside and surrounding areas. The Governor followed it up through Decision Letter No. 522.51/863/84 on 25 April 1984 to propose to the Ministry of Forestry with regard to the area of Bukit Duabelas for around 28,707 hectares to be a biosphere reserve. It took about three years for the Ministry of Forestry to finally issue Decision Letter No. 46/kpts-II/1987 on 12 February 1987 to declare the 29,485 hectares of Bukit Duabelas area to be a biosphere reserve. Later on, after 13 years of lobbying, under the presidency of Abdulrahman Wahid (or better known as Gus Dur), the TNBD was declared as the one and only national park in Indonesia for the exclusive use for the Orang Rimba in 23 August 2000. The total area of the TNBD was expanded to 60,500 hectares including the previous 26,800 hectares of the biosphere reserve. Its boundaries fall within three administration areas, namely the districts of Batanghari, Tebo, and Sarolangun.[30]
The official zoning system of the area currently refers to the TBND zoning document, issued by the Ministry of Forestry on the Decision Letter of SK. 22/IV-KKBHL/2015 on 27 January 2015. The document was the result of a long process in which participatory methods were used in order to accommodate the needs of the Orang Rimba. Referring to the Decision Letter, the zoning system consists of[31]:

- Core zone (red color) – 8,258.1 ha: consists of hilly and protected areas that are considered still pristine. This is an untouched forest and a forbidden zone for human activities.
- Forest zone (yellow color) – 1,804.5 ha: is a buffer zone for the core zone. These are protected areas and free from commercial activities.
- Utilization zone (green color) – 648.3 ha: includes the tourism area in which other forms of exploitation are also allowed. This is the secondary forest, also called utilization zone, the areas with natural resource potential that are used for commercial purposes over the generations.
- Traditional zone (brown color) – 38,780.3 ha: includes the Orang Rimba's settlements, hunting-gathering areas, and the areas where *sialang* tree and fruit orchards are located.
- Religious zone (purple color) – 5,113.4 ha: this zone consists of the Orang Rimba's religious areas that include *tanoh peranoan* (delivery parlor/garden), *bebalai* (holy lands), *tanah dewo* (goddess lands), and *tanah bersetan* (forbidden lands).
- Rehabilitation zone (blue color) – 179.7 ha: open areas due to forest fires, encroachment, and other critical lands that need rehabilitation.

Besides the official legal framework for the national park, the Orang Rimba themselves also have customary rules that they adhere to, in order to protect and preserve the forests. In addition to the official zoning system issued by the Ministry of Forestry, the Orang Rimba have a spatial utilization system, inherited from their ancestors, which delineates the functions and customary rules on forest management.

[30] See: http://www.tnbukitduabelas.id /Konten/unduhan.
[31] See: http://www.tnbukitduabelas.id/profile/zonasi-kawasan.

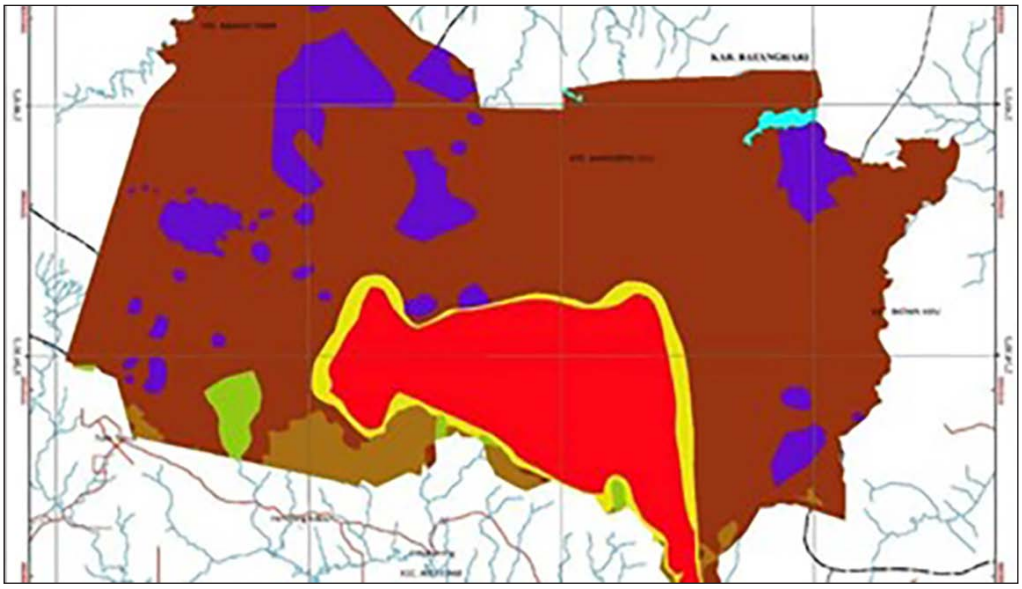

Figure 28. Zoning map of Bukit Duabelas (2019)
Source: http://www.tnbukitduabelas.id/profile/zonasi-kawasan, edited by the Author

Figure 29. The Bukit Duabelas Forest from above (2000). *Source: KKI WARSI*

According to the customary dictates, the forest is divided into three major sections: the forbidden forest (*setali bukit*), the customary forest, and the 'residential' forest. The forbidden forest is referred to as *inumon,* which is the water catchment area, located on the mountain tops and serving as the source of water resources. This part of the forest is believed to be the home of deities and devils. The area should be free from exploitation. The customary forest contains a lot of flora and fauna that are of great value for the Orang Rimba. This area includes the *muaron* (fruits garden/park), the *tanoh peranoan* (delivery parlour/garden), the *pohon sialang* (the tallest trees in the forest, important for honey harvesting), and the *sentubung* (which symbolizes the life of an individual in the Orang Rimba). The residential forest lies on the outskirts and this is where the Orang Rimba have their settlements. It is also in this part of the forest that the Orang Rimba open up fields for various crops. Regrettably, however, a source from the Bukit Duabelas center (quoted in the *Jakarta Post* on 27 November 2012) estimates that, at that time, only 30% of forest in the Bukit Duabelas was intact, while the other 70% had been damaged, primarily because the Bukit Duabelas used to be a forest concession area or Pemegang Hak Pengusahaan Hutan (HPH) area.

2.9 State projects

The designation of the Bukit Duabelas national park is an exception within the broader development context. The prioritization of economic development over other goals has meant that forest conservation has been low on the list of government priorities. In fact, forests have become "savings that are easy to cash in". Forest products are tailored to pay off the country's debts, meet the demand for valuable tropical timber in developed countries, and act as an alternative source of foreign exchange to support national development efforts embodied in various five-year development plans, the so-called Repelita since 1969-1998, and one could say with some justifications, to the present day.

Moreover, the appalling and sad pictures are compounded when we capture the detailed facts on the ground in Jambi, one of many equatorial rainforest stories. This was a vast rainforest before the degradation started, especially since the 1970s, and it rolled back to its current worrying extent. Without doubt, the massive and rapid development in Sumatra has a significant correlation with the progress of forest degradation in Jambi. Today, Indonesia (especially Sumatra) has the highest annual rate of deforestation in the world. According to Kubitza (2017), Jambi has lost its forest cover from 48% in 1990 to 30% in 2013. Another report describes that the remaining forest cover in Jambi is only about 18% in 2017 (Tribun Jambi 2017).

Transmigration projects are the lynchpin of the development programs implemented by the Indonesian government in areas that are inhabited by the Orang Rimba. According to Levang (2003), transmigration projects, which began in 1905 under the *kolonisatie* program initiated by the Dutch administration, were later adopted by the government of Indonesia to tackle some key problems, including population distribution, poverty, and food security (see Levang 2005, Persoon 1998, and Koentjaraningrat 1993 for

more details). Since they remain a key component of contemporary government policy, transmigration projects are expected to continue for the foreseeable future.

To attract newcomers from Java and Bali, the government promoted good infrastructure. The most significant element in this policy was the opening of the Trans Sumatra Highway, which began during the Sukarno era in the 1950s but continued into the Suharto era (1967-1998). The project connects the northern tip of the island with the southern part through a dense network of secondary and tertiary roads. One of the direct impacts of the construction of the Trans Sumatra Highway was the opening of the lowland rainforests. To support development programs, roads connecting hitherto remote and isolated Sumatran areas were constructed, and deforestation followed suit. Prior to the construction of the highway, people living in this part of Sumatra relied on the Batanghari River and its tributaries as a mode of transportation. However, as more roads were developed, access to the forest became relatively easy. This fueled the development of the timber industry in the area, to meet the rapidly rising demand for wood products on the domestic and international markets (Levang 2005).

The role of government projects reached its peak during the Suharto era. In the 1970s, the government started awarding concessions to the president's military and business colleagues, thereby building patronage relations that created business conglomerates. Family businesses *de facto* fell into the hands of the Ministry of Forestry, which was charged with handling them for years. Subsequently, *Perhutani* and *Inhutani* (state-owned companies) were established (see Down to Earth 2002). It was also during the 1970s that the development of large-scale commercial logging reached its peak. A decade later, the timber processing industry was booming and, at the same time, the Ministry of Transmigration launched an ambitious transmigration program through which large numbers of Javanese migrants would be moved to the outer islands.
In the 1990s, the paper and pulp industry as well as oil palm plantations reached their peak. In 1990, the implementation of concessions for Industrial Timber Plantations allowed companies to plant and harvest timber for industrial use on unproductive, permanent production forest land. This contributed to an acceleration of the rate at which permanent production forests were cut for tree crops, especially palm oil, rubber and cocoa, rather than timber (the World Rain Forest Movement 1990).

Recent developments in the forest policy revolve around government plans to increase the production of palm oil in order to take advantage of the record high prices for this commodity, and the equally lucrative production of biofuel. It is not only the demand for timber products and palm oil that has led to high rates of deforestation, but also mining activities, a decentralization policy, national government policies in agriculture, and forest land use and land rights, among others.
In the context of Jambi, and more specifically the Bukit Duabelas area, deforestation started in the early 1980s, at the same time as the government implemented transmigration projects. In the Bukit Duabelas area, pressure emanated from the western and northern sides of the national park. Massive transmigration projects at that time were concentrated in Kuamang Kuning (western part of Makekal) and Tanah Garo (northern

part of Makekal). However, accelerated deforestation is not only attributable to the establishment of transmigration projects, but also to the issuing and establishment of concession companies that were granted the right to convert forests into plantations. The issuing of forest tenure rights to companies such as PT. Alas Kesuma (1970s), PT. Darma Petra Diamonds (1990s), and PT. Inhutani V afterwards, brought deforestation to its peak. Encroachment on forests also came from large-scale oil palm plantations owned by companies such as PT. Sawit Desa Makmur (1989), PT. Eramitra Agro Lestari (1991), PT. Jambi Agro Wijaya (1991), PT. Sari Aditya Loka (1991-1992), and PT. Wana Pioneers afterwards (WARSI, various documents, unpublished).
From a WARSI report (WARSI 1998) I learned that PT. Limbah Kayu Utama (PT. LKU) was awarded a concession of 19,300 hectares of forest based on permit No. 327/KPTS-II/98 on February 27, 1998. The PT. LKU area is administratively located in Tebo District and Batanghari District. The existence of PT. LKU became problematic due to the fact that its concession lies on the border of the national park and is surrounded by some villages. In fact, Tanah Garo and Batu Sawar are located in the heart of the concession area. The Malay inhabitants of these two villages practice slash-and-burn agriculture, called *bertalang* (opening and clearing the forest for agriculture). The average size of land ownership by the Malay people is about 1.5 hectares or *setumbuk*, to borrow a local term. It is estimated that around 300 hectares in the concession belong to villagers.

The overlapping land-use by PT. LKU and villages in the buffer zone of Bukit Duabelas National Park has been a source of conflict. A study conducted by Jambi University (WARSI 1998), Tebo regional development agency and WARSI, shows that an area of some 20,000 hectares that belong to PT. LKU has been in an abandoned state for more than 15 years. In the meantime, the dearth of land for villagers has intensified. Consequently, the pressure on the forests has intensified too. An obvious case in point emerged during my fieldwork. The Orang Melayu and transmigrants can easily enter the protected Bukit Duabelas area. They cut the trees illegally and take them out of the park. Thousands of cubic meters of logs are leaving the national park as a result of this land clearance. After clearing the land, the transmigrants and the Malay people have two options: the land can either be sold to other people or it is converted into rubber and oil palm plantations.

Another government program was developed in 2010. In that year, the government implemented a national scheme, kompensasi kenaikan harga *bahan bakar minyak* (BBM) or fuel compensation program, designed to compensate the poor for the steep rise in fuel prices. However, the three groups of the Orang Rimba in this study were left out of the scheme. This was largely due to the lack of census data of the Orang Rimba, which implied it was difficult to know the exact size of the groups, let alone determine who fulfills the requirements set by the government to receive such assistance. WARSI carried out the only survey that exists in cooperation with BPS in 2010, which was limited to enumerating the population of the Orang Rimba living in the Bukit Duabelas area. To date, there has been no survey of the Orang Rimba living in Bukit Tigapuluh or those living along the Trans Sumatra Highway. Consequently, only a small section of the Orang Rimba received assistance from this compensation scheme.

2.10 Government efforts to resettle the Orang Rimba

The role of the government has been very influential in the shaping of the livelihood of the Orang Rimba both directly and indirectly. Through the transmigration projects and the issuance of logging and plantation concessions the government has had a big impact on the living environment of the Orang Rimba, often sponsored by international institutions such as the World Bank, as well as commercial banks operating nationally and internationally.

Another important element of the government's development agenda consists of various resettlement programs in Jambi. For over five decades, as the pace of forest degradation in Jambi accelerated, the government, through the Ministry of Social Affairs, made various attempts to persuade the Orang Rimba to settle down and start living an ordinary village life just like the Malay people. This also meant that the government wanted the Orang Rimba to change their livelihood from hunting and gathering forest products to sedentary agriculture.

It is worth examining the nature of this *Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Masyarakat Terasing* (PKMT), or program for 'isolated and estranged' people, which later after 2002, under the influence of AMAN, has changed to *Pemberdayaan Komunitas Adat Terpencil* (PKAT) or empowerment for isolated customary people. In the spirit of improving the lives of *komunitas adat terpencil* and in the name of *pemerataan pembangunan* or inclusive growth or development, the government adopted an all-embracing resettlement approach to tackle the problems of these remote communities. This was specifically done with *persatuan Indonesia* or the national unity of Indonesia in mind, an idea proposed and

Figure 30. An early resettlement project for the Orang Rimba in Pulau Kidak (1985) (© G. Persoon)

supported by the regime of Sukarno and later fully developed by the Suharto regime. The projects were considered to bring 'civilization' to the 'isolated people'. The first project to resettle the Orang Rimba in the area of Bayung Lencir, district Musi Banyuasin in the province of South Sumatra began in 1951. At that time the first effort was tailored to collecting data and preparing the Orang Rimba to accept the development program. It was not until 1964 that the pilot project finally began (Departemen Sosial 1973; Persoon 1994; Martodirdjo 1998).

Persoon and Wardani (2017) show that many of these efforts to resettle the Orang Rimba have failed because the projected future offered by the Ministry of Social Affairs is in sharp contrast with the way the Orang Rimba would like to shape their future. Life in a resettlement village conflicts with Orang Rimba culture and traditions. Most of the Orang Rimba prefer to go back to the forest again and only a few people or some small groups have successfully accepted the new way of life. One of the examples is one group in Bukit Suban (see Prasetijo 2011). In spite of the limited amount of success of the resettlement project, the Orang Rimba continue to be one of the targeted groups of the Ministry of Social Affairs for this program aimed at the country's 'isolated communities'.

2.11 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to provide a general ethnographic and historical background of the situation of the Orang Rimba in the central part of Jambi. This general overview of the present-day situation gives a brief description of the livelihood context, as a basis for further discussion in the following chapters.
The chapter started with the discussion of President Jokowi's visit in late 2015. As discussed at the start of this chapter, it appears that the current president intends to repeat previous policies, which were committed to pulling the Orang Rimba from their 'primitive state' into mainstream society on the road to social and economic development. As discussed, however, this is likely to increase rather than reduce pressure on the remaining forests. Such programs commenced as far back as the early 1970s, when the Ministry of Social Affairs wanted to resettle nomadic societies such as the Orang Rimba on smaller pieces of land with modest but permanent housing, rather than provide real compensation for the loss of the only asset they have: land, with dense forests full of plant and animal life. This policy, if Jokowi's administration implements it exactly as he stated, is likely to hasten the death knell of forest-dependent Orang Rimba.

The Orang Rimba strongly maintain their tradition despite the more open relationship with other ethnic groups. Some vivid examples reflect on their hunting and gathering activities as the most important element of their life up to date. In other words, it can be said that the Orang Rimba have local knowledge which they have practiced for centuries in treating nature and maintaining their way of life. They have used traditional ways of tilling land, gathering forest products, hunting, and fishing. The sharing of their catch in hunting, managing their communal resources, such as *sialang* trees, and the collection of other forest products, indicate that their local knowledge is still relevant at present. At the same

time, they are also engaged in small-scale agricultural activities, particularly in rubber and oil palm plantations.

Another important component of the lives of the Orang Rimba is the existence of the non-state actors such as the NGOs, the media, and others with an interest in these people or their lands and resources. Through them, the existence and livelihood of the Orang Rimba have been influenced significantly. It is worth noting that the long-standing relation between the Orang Rimba with *jenang/waris* is a very vital element of the lives of the Orang Rimba. Moreover, the roles of *jenang*/*waris* have evolved over time. This is not only because these intermediaries have become an integral component of the social networks of the Orang Rimba, but they also have wide-ranging functions. Not only do they uphold the interests of the Orang Rimba but nowadays their own economic interests are at the forefront.

Now that a general ethnographic and historical background of the Orang Rimba has been sketched, the following three chapters will illustrate differences within this population by detailing the types of food that the three different groups consume and how they acquire them.